

AG Strategies

March 1999

Agriculture Business Strategies

Agdex 846-1

Developing a Promotional Plan

The purpose of this factsheet series is to help producers and processors understand the key elements needed to manage a business. The factsheets also discuss some of the essential components used to develop a business plan and assess the profitability of a business venture.

You're proud of your butter tarts and cookies. You've worked hard on product development to get the taste, texture and appearance that your customers want. Now you want to let more people know about your great product. You want your sales to increase. Creating an image and developing a promotional package are ways to show customers you mean business.

This factsheet discusses how to create a product image and incorporate this image into a promotion package. A good promotional plan for your product helps you focus on your market, streamlines your advertising activities and ensures that a consistent, high quality image is portrayed and maintained. You've heard many times that marketing your product is the key to success in your food business. Ask yourself, why would a customer want to buy my product? How do you see the customer using this product? Is it convenient? Does it taste great? Is it new and different? It is packaged elegantly for a gift? Your promotional package should help the customer understand these factors.

A promotional package should be flexible enough that it can be used in a number of ways. You may wish to work with the media, go to trade shows, contact buyers directly and use it to impress financial backers. A promotional package is part of public relations. Public relations will help:

- position your company as a leader, enhance your reputation and grow your client base

- position you as an expert in the food business so the media uses you for quotes, interviews and information.
- build consumer confidence and trust
- cultivate new markets
- impress financial backers and encourage investors

Creating your image

First impressions are important, especially in business. Does your business portray a high quality, lasting, and competent impression or is it sloppy, disorganized and fly-by-night?

To create an image, start by describing your food product in one or two words. For example:

- easy-to-prepare
- as a treat
- home-cooking
- convenient
- nutritional
- low-fat
- for parties only
- natural
- for kids
- everyday meals
- fresh from the farm
- ethnic

Example:

Care Package Butter Tarts – Consider how you would tell a customer about them. Do they taste just like Grandma's? Are they available in their local store? How many do they have to buy?

If you have other products like Care Package Apple Pie and Care Package Chocolate Chip Cookies, you can create an image around a home-cooking, tastes like Mom's theme. Develop one or two sentences that clearly explain your products.

For example: "Care Package Bakery products remind you of farm fresh home cooking. Pies, tarts and cookies are available in conveniently sized packages that can be shipped overnight." This description can serve as an infomercial for your product. If you also produced Oriental Spring Rolls, it would be more difficult to find a theme that properly promotes both the butter tarts and the spring rolls. You may be able to capitalize on some aspect of this product diversity by examining your client base, the strength and weaknesses of your products and the strengths and weaknesses of your business.

Picture your image

When starting a new food business you likely won't have money to hire graphic artists or a marketing firm to create an image for your food business. Are you or is someone in your family creative? What about friends? Would they be willing to help with the creative side in exchange for some of your food product? If you have access to a computer, you can create very professional looking promotional items without the expense of a professional printer. A color printer will add another dimension to your promotions. But don't assume that doing it yourself is always cheaper. Copy shops and office supply companies can often compete on price and their quality is usually better.

Start by picking a font (style of print) for your company name. Which one do you think would be best for Care Package Bakery?

Care Package Bakery

CARE PACKAGE BAKERY

Care Package Bakery

Care Package Bakery

How about a graphic or picture you could use for your product?

Example:



CARE PACKAGE BAKERY

Anywhere, Alberta

TOT 1B1

phone/fax - (780) 123 - 4567

Is it true that a picture is worth a thousand words? Do you want an original graphic to portray your company and its products? It may cost you more initially, but it may help you establish a unique image. When you combine the picture with the font, you can often get a completely different feel for the company.

The possibilities are endless. It's important to spend the time at the beginning to get your image right. It's difficult to change down the road. It could cost you more and possibly confuse your customer.

Prepare your company and product brochure

By the time you've created an image for your product, you've already thought through the following questions.

- Who is your customer?
- What does my business promise to do?
- What are my business' strengths and weaknesses?
- How am I unique?
- What are the current trends that I can capitalize on?

Your infomercial or slogan describes your product in one or two sentences. It can also do double-duty as the beginning of your mission statement. You can use the same information to develop a brochure to describe your company and products.

You want your brochure to help you develop a strong sense of your position in the marketplace. You want to inspire confidence in your company and products. Your brochure should:

- connect your business with your target market both emotionally and logically
- build trust, confidence and personal rapport (even before the first sales call!)
- position you as an expert
- convey uniqueness and personality with passion and believability
- promise tangible results and value

- Communicate the personal values that guide and excite you and affect your ability to serve your clients in an exceptional way
- motivate the reader to request more information, or place an order

Your brochure needs to communicate value to your customer. Be sure to write as if you were speaking to them directly. You need to show confidence, quality, honesty and knowledge to your potential customer. Relate to them on a personal level.

Endorsements and testimonials from current clients provide compelling evidence to back up your food product. Ask them to point out specific benefits of your food product. Make sure these stand out on your brochure.

Provide tangible information about your product. List specific benefits or characteristics. Will the customer be able to answer "What's in it for me?" Use bullets for easy reading by the customer.

Keep the front cover simple, but attractive. You want your potential customer to be motivated to pick it up and read it. Hiring a professional to help with design of your front cover can be money well spent. Your company's name and slogan can be included.

The back panel of your brochure should tell the customer about you and your business: what experience have you had in food processing; unique qualifications; how long have you been in business and who uses your product.

The inside should provide highlights about your food products. It should answer the following questions. How would they use it or cook it? Is it available in single service sizes or in bulk? Where is it available? How long can they keep it? Is it processed in a unique way that increases its nutritional value? It should discuss anything that helps the customer decide to purchase your product. However, don't overwhelm the customer either. Just the facts is a good policy to follow. A picture also helps describe your product.

What's in a promotional package?

Your promotional package should include enough information about your product so that a retailer wants to buy it or the media is inspired to do a story about it. The basic pieces should include:

- **basic brochure**
(as described above)
- **letterhead and business cards**
Use your graphics and print style in your business cards and letterhead. Your business card should communicate to the customer what your food business is about. Keep it simple. What can you include on your card to help your customer remember your product? Use good quality card stock and be sure the information is easily read and accurate.
- **factsheets**
Each of your products can have its own factsheet. Include a picture of the food and information about the ingredients, packaging and serving sizes. Information on nutritional value and ways to use or cook the product can also be added. Highlight product benefits such as convenience, quality and shelf life.
- **wholesale and retail price lists**
Include information on size and case lot size and dimension. Print the price lists on separate sheets of paper so they are easy to update.
- **folder**
A folder ties all of the pieces of your promotional package together and allows you to customize the folder for different uses. Retailers are interested in the price list and shipping information. The media wants to share with the audience where the product is available. Make sure that the folder has a place for your business card.
- **labels**
Include a sample label from your product in the folder. Your brochures, business cards, and fact sheets should coordinate with your label.
- **news release**
When preparing a news release make sure it's news worthy. What has recently happened that customers would want to know about? Have you launched a new product line? Are you opening a new production facility? News releases should provide the customer with all of the information they need to make a purchase. Include information about where your product is available, what it costs, why they would want to buy it and how they can use it. Start your news release with a catchy phrase or idea. Grab the customer's attention.

Depending on your business and your product, you may want to develop some of the following:

- **catalogue**

Print a catalogue only if you have enough items and customers to warrant the expense. Catalogues are essential if you have mail-order customers. Update them regularly. Customers won't order if they think your catalogue is out-of-date.

- **display items**

If you do trade shows or in-store demos, you might want to purchase display materials. Banners, napkins and serving dishes can also portray your image.

- **newsletters**

If a newsletter is going to be read it must contain valuable information. You need to show your customers the benefits they receive from doing business with you. Include testimonials and quotes from satisfied customers to show your strengths and demonstrate the reliability and consistency of your business. Provide useful product information, not sales information. To gauge interest in your newsletter and your product, include a response mechanism.

- **food sample**

Nothing draws a potential customer more than the chance to taste your product. Some food products can be easily packaged into small portions. Spices, condiments and candies are good examples. Trade shows or demos are a good place to provide a food sample.

A consistent image helps create your market. Your packaging, invoices, cheques, and envelopes can have your company's logo and name on them.

Monitoring your promotional plan

- How are you going to know if your promotional materials are working? Ask your customers how they heard about your product. You may find that radio provides a good outlet for promoting your product. You may want to put more resources into radio, but experts suggest you use a variety of methods.
- Retail stores can be an excellent source of information on your promotional package. Did your package encourage them to sell your product? What information do they need to make a decision about carrying a new product? Have they noticed customers picking up brochures or business cards that may have been left in the store?
- If you sell at a Farmer's Market, the market manager can provide feedback based on his/her experience. Stall holders who sell noncompeting products might also provide informal comments on your product.
- Keep a notebook of comments, feedback and advice from others. Refer to these on a regular basis. You may find a number of related comments which will help focus your promotional plan.

References:

The Art of Brochures by Ellen Looven, GMO Tactics – The Weekly Guerrilla

Compiled by:

Jo-Ann Hall
Family Business Specialist
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development